B'desh police say ex-councillor was behind Hadi's murder

DHAKA: Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi was killed on the instructions of Taijul Islam Chowdhury Bappi, a former councillor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Ward-6, said Shafikul Islam, additional commissioner of the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, on Tuesday.

Bappi is also the organising secretary of the Dhaka City North unit of Jubo League.

Shafikul disclosed the information at a press conference held at the DMP Media Centre this afternoon.

He said the DB has submitted a charge sheet against 17 people, including prime accused Faisal Karim Masud, in connection with Hadi's murder. Of the accused, 12 have already been arrested.

The DB official said the investigation revealed that Faisal is a member of the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League and that Hadi was killed in an act of political vengeance.

Responding to a question, Shafikul said Faisal and his associate Alamgir Sheikh carried out the killing on Bappi's instructions.

Hadi, an aspiring candidate for Dhaka-8 and a prominent youth leader during last year's July uprising, was shot in the Paltan area on December 12. He died on December 18 while undergoing treatment in Singapore.

On December 14, Inqilab Moncho Member Secretary Abdullah Al Jaber filed an attempted murder case with Paltan Model Police Station against Faisal and several unnamed individuals, which later turned into a murder case. The case was subsequently transferred to the DB.—The Daily Star (Bangladesh)/ANN

23 Venezuelan, 32 Cuban troops were killed during US raid

CARACAS: Thirty-two Cuban and 23 Venezuelan military personnel were killed during the US raid to seize Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, according to tolls published on Tuesday by the two Latin American allies.

During his 12 volatile years in power, Maduro — like his predecessor Hugo Chavez — employed specialised Cuban soldiers for his protection.

Venezuela's Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said that Maduro's presidential guard was largely wiped out "in cold blood" by US troops who bombarded the capital and seized him from his home.

Cuba published the names of 32 members of its military who died in the nighttime assault that led to Maduro's capture in Caracas on January 3.

They included three senior officers from the Cuban interior ministry.

The Venezuelan military published online a list of 23 of its personnel who were also killed, including five admirals.

In the face of pressure from Washington, the leftist governments in Cuba and Venezuela maintain close ties in military cooperation, health and education.—AFP

WOMEN push prams along a snow-covered path in a Manchester park, as cold weather grips Britain.—Reuters

Six die in weather accidents as cold snap grips Europe

PARIS: Icy temperatures plunged swathes of Europe into a second day of travel chaos on Tuesday, with weather-related accidents causing six deaths from the continent's bitterest cold snap this winter so far.

Five of those deaths since the mercury dropped on Monday were in France alone, while a woman died in Bosnia as heavy snow and rain sparked floods and power outages across the Balkans.

Paris's two airports, Roissy-Charles de Gaulle and Orly, were to cancel many flights early Wednesday to allow ground crews to clear snow from runways and de-ice planes. Forty percent of flights at Charles de Gaulle were to be scrapped, and 25 percent at Orly.

In Britain, the mercury plunged to -12.5°C overnight Monday-Tuesday in Norfolk, eastern England, while temperatures below -10°C across the Netherlands brought trains to a standstill on Tuesday morning.

"Last night was the coldest night of the winter so far," Britain's Met Office said, with nearly all of the United Kingdom on alert for snow and ice and more snowfall expected.

With the chill making roads perilous, three people died in accidents linked to black ice in south-western France on Monday morning, authorities said, while a taxi driver died in hospital on Monday night after veering into the Marne river in the Paris region.

His passenger was still being treated for hypothermia, according to a police source. Another driver also lost his life east of Paris on Monday after a collision with a heavy goods vehicle.

Amsterdam's Schiphol airport, the Netherlands' main flight hub, meanwhile, saw a second day of weather-driven cancellations on Tuesday, with more than 400 flights grounded and travellers facing huge queues at the airline counters.

Trains from the Dutch national railway operator NS only began rolling again after 10:00 am (0900 GMT), with services limited afterwards.

But planes got off the ground again from Liverpool in northwest England and Aberdeen in north-east Scotland, after the cold had forced both airports to close on Monday.

'Like climbing Mont Blanc'

After nearly 40 centimetres (16 inches) fell in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo at the weekend, a woman died in hospital after being hit by a tree that collapsed under the weight of the snow on Monday, according to the police.

Dozens of villages across neighbouring Serbia were left without power in the wake of the snowfall, while downpours caused several rivers to overflow in Bosnia and forced the evacuation of dozens of homes in Albania.

More than 300 schools were shut in Scotland on Tuesday, the national *BBC* broadcaster reported, with Scottish train services also severely disrupted.

"Tuesday will bring more severe snow and ice to the north of Scotland — and with it, continued travel disruption and risks to people and communities," Scottish transport minister Fiona Hyslop warned late on Monday.

"It's important that people plan ahead, consider their travel plans, and work from home if that's an option." Several smaller French airports were closed on Tuesday, according to the transport ministry.

In the French capital, Monday's snowfall had settled overnight across much of Paris's pavements, with pedestrians forced to navigate treacherously icy streets.—AFP

Nestle recalls infant formula over toxin fears

ZURICH: Swiss food giant Nestle announced on Monday a recall of batches of infant formula in several European countries, notably France, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Italy and Sweden, as a precautionary measure.

On its website, the group said it had detected a "quality issue" in an ingredient sourced from one of its major suppliers.

"Nestle has undertaken testing of all arachidonic acid oil and corresponding oil mixes used in the production of potentially impacted infant nutrition products," it said on its website.

"No illnesses have been confirmed in connection with the products involved to date." Nestle said it was in contact with authorities in the relevant countries "to ensure the necessary steps are taken".

"Nestle assures parents and caregivers that it is implementing appropriate actions, including a product recall where necessary."

Nestle France said it was carrying out a "preventive and voluntary recall" of certain batches of its Guigoz and Nidal infant formulas after new investigations showed the potential presence of cereulide, a toxin that can cause digestive issues.

The company posted pictures on local versions of its website showing the batch numbers of affected products, which are sold under different names. In Germany they are called Beba and Alfamino.

Nestle provided instructions for returning the products and obtaining a refund, as well as a phone number to answer consumer questions.—AFP

Nvidia unveils AI chip platform amid rising competition

LAS VEGAS: AI juggernaut Nvidia unveiled its latest AI platform on Monday, as the world's most valuable company works to maintain its leadership in supplying the chips that power the artificial intelligence revolution.

The California-based company made its announcement at the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where CEO Jensen Huang's keynote was an early must-see event at the globe's biggest tech showcase.

With its new Vera Rubin product, first announced in September, Nvidia is seeking to lock in its dominance of the AI chip business. The company currently holds an estimated 80 per cent of the global market for AI data center chips.

However, Nvidia faces mounting pressure from multiple fronts, with traditional chip-making rivals like AMD and Intel pushing hard to compete.

Meanwhile, Nvidia's biggest customers — Google, Amazon, and Microsoft — are increasingly developing their own chips to reduce their dependence on the company.

Google's latest AI model, Gemini 3, was trained without Nvidia's technology. China is also racing to build domestic alternatives to Nvidia products, which have faced US export restrictions, hobbling the Chinese tech sector.

Nvidia said Rubin-based products would be available from partners in the second half of 2026.—AFP

Where the global minimum corporate tax deal stands now

PARIS: More than 145 countries have agreed to update a landmark global tax deal, carving out exemptions for US multinationals after Washington pushed back against rules designed to ensure big corporations pay at least 15% tax worldwide.

The US exemptions could reshape how countries enforce the agreement and affect global tax revenues as the impact becomes clearer.

Major economies have long sought to stop multinationals from shifting taxable profits to low-tax jurisdictions, regardless of where their sales occur.

Increasingly, income from intangible sources such as drug patents, software, and royalties has migrated to these jurisdictions, allowing companies to avoid higher taxes in their home countries.

The original deal was expected to generate about $150 billion in new annual revenue, with taxing rights on over $125 billion of profit shifted to countries where multinationals earn income.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has since revised its extra revenue estimate to $192 billion, but has not yet factored in the US exemptions.

Governments agreed in 2021 to set a 15% minimum tax on big multinationals' overseas profits — the first major overhaul of cross-border tax rules in a generation.

Countries could still set their own corporate tax rates, but if companies paid less than 15% in a particular jurisdiction, other governments could "top up" their taxes to the minimum, removing the incentive to shift profits.

Washington's objection

While Joe Biden's administration backed the 2021 deal, Republican lawmakers argued it unfairly targeted US multinationals and hurt competitiveness.

Implementation was expected to be complicated from the start, partly because it left unresolved how existing US minimum tax rules, introduced by Donald Trump's first administration, would align with global standards.

Trump threw the deal's future into doubt after taking office again in January 2025, declaring in an executive order that it would have "no force or effect" for the US. His administration threatened retaliatory taxes against countries imposing levies on US firms under the 2021 agreement.

Washington dropped the threat after G7 countries brokered a compromise in June, exempting US companies from key provisions. The global deal was updated on Monday to reflect those carve-outs.

Where deal stand?

The revised agreement effectively exempts US-parented multinationals from top-up tax rules, recognising the US's minimum tax regime on foreign profits of 12.6%. It also simplifies compliance and offers exemptions for certain tax incentives.

The US Treasury hailed the update as a win for US tax sovereignty, while the National Association of Manufacturers said it would ensure US firms compete on a level playing field.

Tax justice campaigners, including Gabriel Zucman of the EU Tax Observatory, criticised the changes as "pathetic" and a retreat from the principle of a common minimum tax.

As of October, more than 65 countries had begun implementing the global tax deal, the OECD said. Work continues on further simplification and easing compliance burdens.—Reuters

NEWSMAKERS

BANGKOK: The sun sets above Wat Arun, also known as the "temple of dawn".—Reuters

KYIV: A faithful plunges into the icy waters of the Dnipro River to mark the Epiphany Day. The day commemorates the visit of the Three Wise Men (Magi) to baby Jesus.—AFP

SOUTH Korea's President Lee Jae Myung takes a selfie with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping after a dinner at the Great Hall of the People.—AFP

S. Korea's president snaps Xi selfie with Chinese 'backdoor' phone

BEIJING: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung snapped a selfie with Xi Jinping using a smartphone gifted to him by the Chinese leader, who had joked at their last meeting that the device might be capable of spying.

Lee posted a selfie of himself, Xi, and their wives on the social media platform X on Monday during a visit to Beijing.

"A selfie with President Xi Jinping and his wife, taken with the Xiaomi I received as a gift in Gyeongju," Lee wrote.

"Thanks to them, I got the shot of a lifetime," he said.

"I will communicate more frequently and collaborate more closely going forward." In the selfie, all four first families are seen smiling.

Lee's office also posted a short YouTube video of the scene, with Xi complimenting the South Korean leader's photo skills.

The Xiaomi handset made headlines in November when Xi cracked a joke to Lee on the sidelines of an APEC summit in South Korea.

When Lee asked if the communication line on the device was secure, the Chinese leader urged him to "check if there is a backdoor" — referring to pre-installed software that could allow third-party monitoring.

The banter was a rare display of humour from the Chinese leader, who is not often seen making jokes, let alone about espionage.

The South Korean President has said Xi was "unexpectedly quite good at making jokes".

During their ninety-minute summit on Monday, Xi urged Lee to join Beijing in making the "right strategic choices" in a world that is "becoming more complex and turbulent".

Lee's visit to China followed the US military operation in Caracas that captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and brought him to New York to face narco-trafficking charges — a raid condemned by Beijing and Pyongyang.—AFP

BRUSSELS: Ring-necked parakeets flock a park in the Belgian capital.—AFP

SEEON (Germany): Midwives protest for improvement in working conditions on the sidelines of a congress of the Christian Socialist Union.—AFP